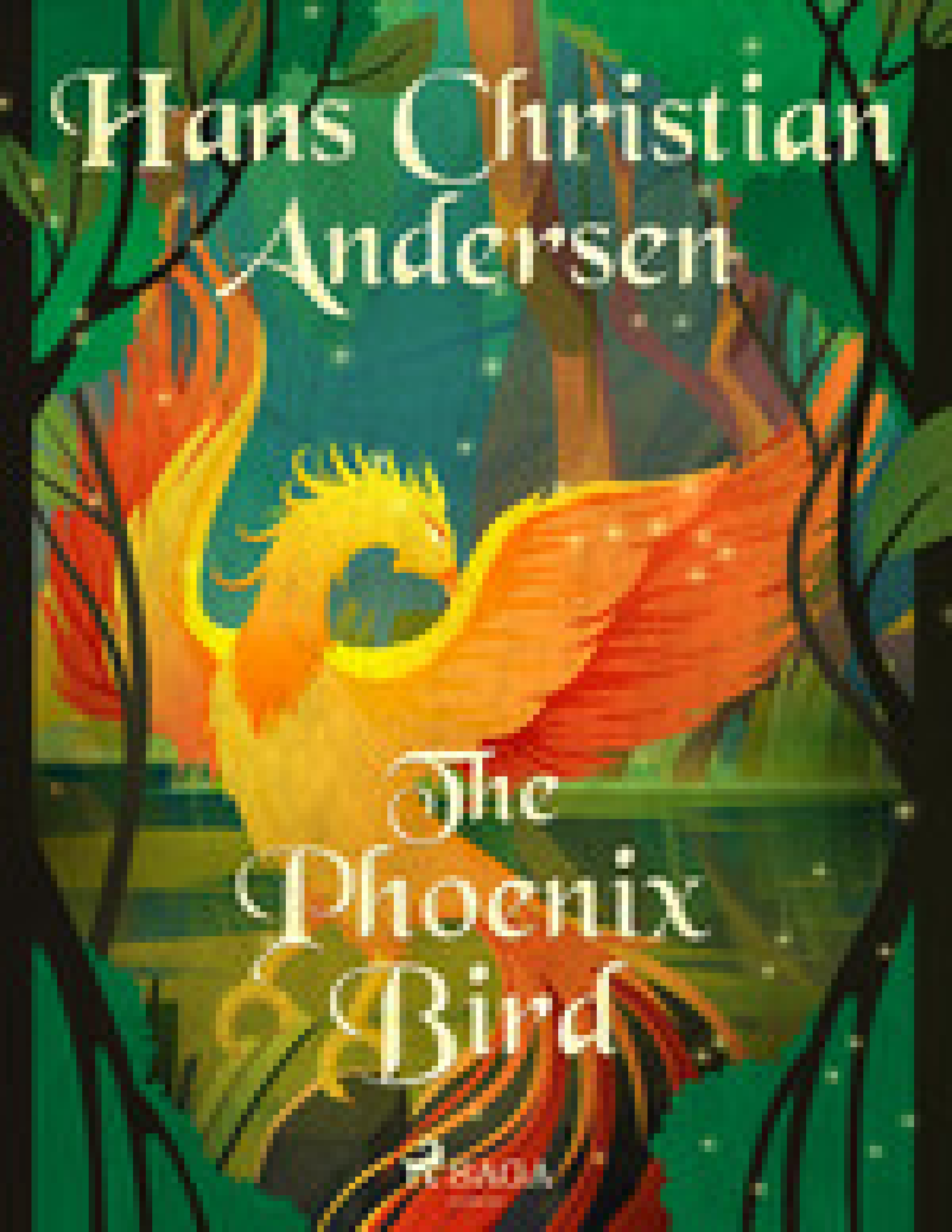
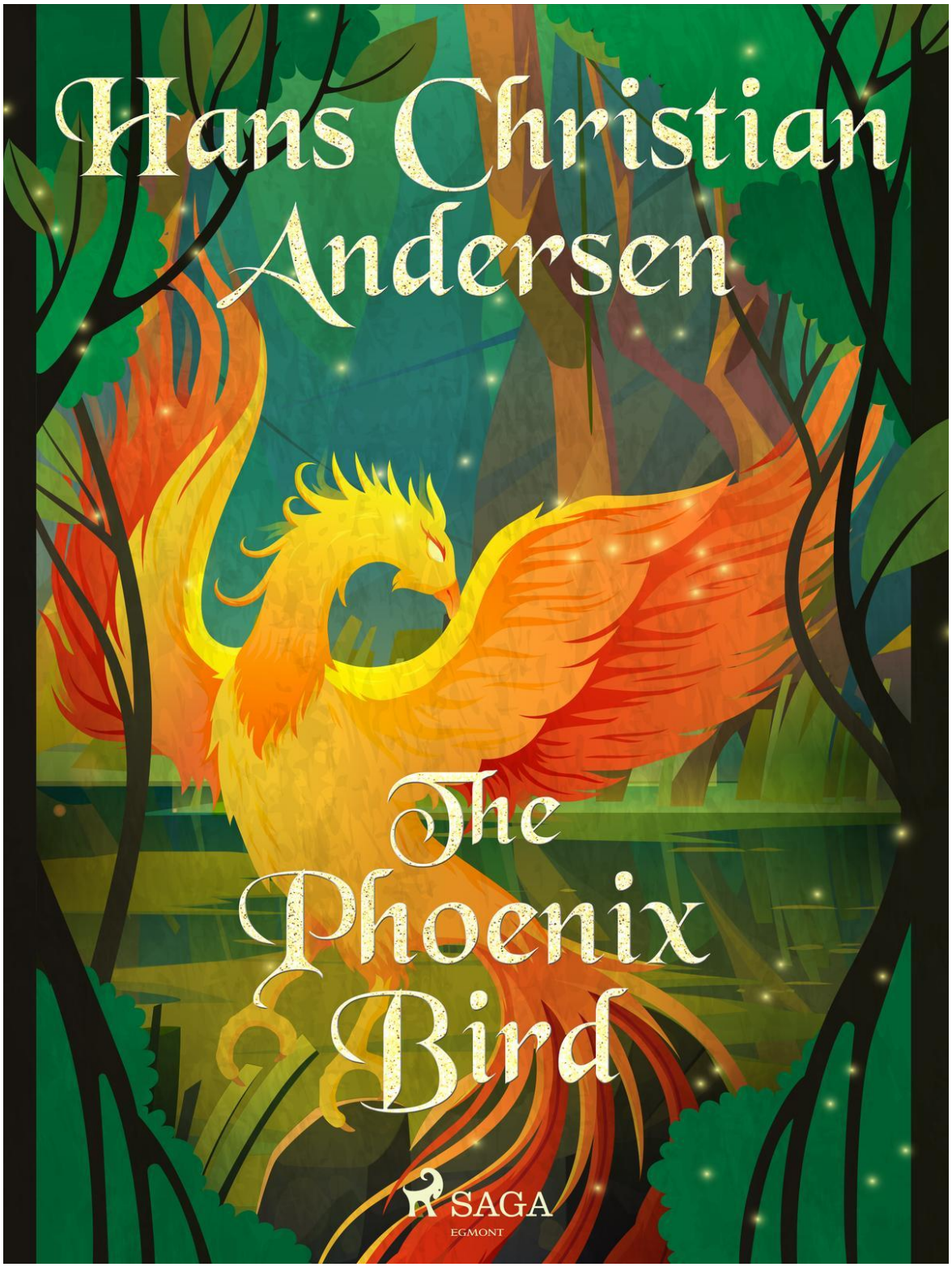

Hans Christian Andersen
The Phoenix Bird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SAGA
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Hans Christian Andersen

# The Phoenix Bird

SAGA

*The Phoenix Bird*
Original title:
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Translated by Jean Hersholt
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# The Phoenix Bird

Beneath the tree of knowledge in the garden of paradise stood a rosebush. And here, in the first rose, a bird was born. His plumage was beautiful, his song glorious, and his flight was like the flashing of light. But when Eve plucked the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and she and Adam were driven from paradise, a spark fell from the flaming sword of the angel into the nest of the bird and set it afire. The bird perished in the flames, but from the red egg in the nest there flew a new bird, the only one of its kind, the one solitary phoenix bird. The legend tells us how he lives in Arabia and how every century he burns himself to death in his nest, but each time a new phoenix, the only one in the world, flies out from the red egg.

The bird darts about as swift as light, beautiful in color, glorious in song. When a mother sits beside her infant's cradle, he settles on the pillow and forms a glory with his wings about the head of the child. He flies through the room of contentment and brings sunshine into it, and he makes the violets on the humble cupboard smell sweet.

But the phoenix is not a bird of Arabia alone. In the glimmer of the northern lights he flies over the plains of Lapland and hops amid the yellow flowers in the short Greenland summer. Deep beneath the copper mountains of Falun, and in England's coal mines, he flies in the form of a powdered moth over the hymnbook resting in the hands of the pious miner. He floats down the sacred waters of the Ganges on a lotus leaf, and the eye of the Hindu maid brightens when she beholds him.

Phoenix bird! Don't you know him? The bird of paradise, the holy swan of song? He sat on the car of Thespis, like a chattering raven, flapping his black gutter-stained wings; the swan's red, sounding beak swept over the singing harp of Iceland; he sat on Shakespeare's shoulder, disguised as Odin's raven, and whispered, "Immortality!" into

his ear; and at the minstrels' feast he fluttered through the halls of the Wartburg.

Phoenix bird! Don't you know him? He sang the *Marseillaise* to you, and you kissed the feather that fell from his wing; he came in the glory of paradise, and perhaps you turned away from him toward the sparrow that sat with gold tinsel on its wings.

The bird of paradise-renewed each century-born in flame, dying in flame! Your portrait in a frame of gold hangs in the halls of the rich, but you yourself often fly around lonely and misunderstood-a myth only: "The phoenix bird of Arabia."

When you were born in the garden of paradise, in its first rose, beneath the tree of knowledge, our Lord kissed you and gave you your true name-poetry!